

RENEWAL OF THE IPC REVISION ROADMAP

1. The IPC Committee of Experts (Committee) decided to take a proactive approach in identifying the areas where the IPC should be revised in the coming years and the IPC Community has worked in line with the IPC Revision Roadmap agreed on in 2013. Since then, a good pace of revision has been observed up to now as was reported to the Committee at each session. Taking into account the fact that the IPC Revision Roadmap has contributed to such achievement, the direction and elements introduced by the IPC Revision Roadmap should continue to be implemented and applied to the IPC revision work going beyond 2017.
2. The “MEDIUM-TERM STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE WORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION (WIPO) FOR 2016-2021” taken note by Member States at the WIPO General Assembly in 2016 talks about the strategy on IPC, with reference to the Cooperative Patent Classification (CPC) as follows:
3. “The International Patent Classification (IPC) remains the unifying system of patent classification worldwide. The common classification system adopted by certain members of the IP5 provides a more granular and advanced classification system that builds upon the IPC. The objective will be to ensure that the linkage between the two systems continues to be maintained in order to ensure the maximum coherence internationally for patent classification.”
4. One factor that might affect the IPC Revision Roadmap is the significant expansion of the regional coverage of the CPC. Under such circumstances, those areas where there is a large amount of patent applications from emerging countries with significant growth rate and where the number of subgroups in the IPC is not sufficient for effective search continue to be important as candidate areas for revision because 1) revision work in those areas in a cooperative manner between two systems contributes to the maintenance of coherence between those systems, and 2) those technical areas would also be important as possible emerging technical areas for other countries and should be reflected in the unifying system of patent classification worldwide, i.e. the IPC. From those perspectives, the list of candidate areas as annexed to the IPC Revision Roadmap should be continuously updated by the International Bureau and be considered by the Committee in the context of IPC revision. Other factors may also have an effect on the IPC Revision Roadmap.
5. As well as areas where there is a large amount of patent applications from emerging countries, New Emerging Technologies (NET), such as Internet of Things (IoT), are also important as candidate areas for revision. Revision in those areas has to be done in a quick and timely manner in order to maximize the function of the IPC as an efficient search tool for new technologies. Especially in this context, NET-related revision requests might also be submitted by the EPO/The United States of America or JapRan in case that introducing NET-related new areas would be planned for the CPC or FI, in order to maximize the benefit by the IPC, as well as by the CPC or FI. In case where the discussion goes through the IP5 phase, both the IP5 phase and the IPC phase should coordinate well and have smooth transition of both phases through striking the balance between speed and detailed aspects. Concerning the identification of NET, it would also be important to reflect the opinion of the industry and the Committee should consider how it could be done in an effective manner.
6. The areas where IPC revision and related work are conducted should also be identified, duly taking account of the following aspects:
 - a) overly complex structures. Such structures could be obstacles to precise classification, even for examiners; and
 - b) divergence in classification practice in an area to be revised.

7. Those two aspects might also impact the possible use of emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, machine learning and text categorization, for classification purposes.

8. As revision work becomes more complex and more efficiency is required for revision work by the IPC Community, the effective use of more flexible and efficient format for the work such as task forces/expert groups should be considered in addition to the elements introduced by the current IPC Revision Roadmap. The IPC Revision Working Group is authorized to adopt such format when the complexity of a revision project and/or the duration of revision projects necessitates.

[End of Annex III and of document]